

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 19, 2008

The Honorable Norm Dicks  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,  
and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
B-308 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and  
Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Dicks and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

We urge you to support a funding level of **\$176 million for the National Endowment for the Arts in the Fiscal Year 2009 Interior Appropriations bill**. The NEA was last funded at this amount in 1992, and has never recovered from a 40 percent funding cut in FY 1996. Today, its programs remain seriously underfunded. The American public wants and needs an affordable investment in the arts.

Thanks to your leadership, in FY 2008, the NEA was funded at \$144.7 million – an increase of over \$19 million over FY 2007, and the largest increase for the arts in 28 years. Despite this significant progress towards restoring full funding to the NEA, the President requested only \$128.4 million for FY 2009, a cut of \$16.3 million. A decrease of this amount would have a crippling affect on the NEA's ability to continue to provide successful grants and services on which communities across the county rely. Furthermore, without a substantial increase over FY 2008 levels the NEA will be unable to expand popular initiatives like *American Masterpieces* while sustaining existing programs.

A budget of \$176 million would further the NEA's mission to bring the arts to all Americans. The funding would support the creation, preservation, and presentation of the arts in America through the NEA's core programs, including *Access to Artistic Excellence*, *the Big Read*, *Challenge America*, *Learning in the Arts* and *Federal/State Partnerships*.

The NEA supports artistic excellence and improves access to the arts. Through these core programs, the NEA awarded 2,234 grants totaling \$100,712,053 in 435 congressional districts last year alone.

The NEA contributes to the development and economic growth of communities nationwide. The nonprofit arts industry generates \$134 billion annually in economic activity, supporting 4.85 million full-time equivalent jobs and returning \$10.5 billion to the federal government in income taxes. That is an 8:1 return.



The NEA supports life-long learning in the arts. The NEA's education programs have helped to sustain support in local communities for arts education, which has been proven to help close the education achievement gap as well as to benefit children and adults in many important ways. During these critical times, Americans look to the arts for education, entertainment, and enlightenment.

We strongly urge you to increase NEA funding to \$176 million in the FY 2009 Interior Appropriations bill. By approving this increase, you will strengthen the NEA's ability to ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to benefit from the arts. We appreciate your attention to this request, and hope we can count on your continued support.

Sincerely,

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Wm. Lacy Clay

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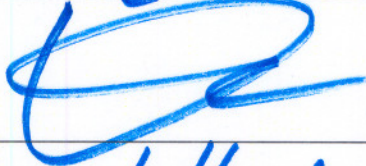
Earl Blumenauer

Bill De



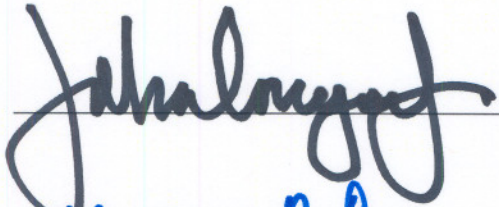
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Dennis J. Kucinich



William D. Puleant

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John Dingell

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B. B. Feller



Ellen O. Tausscher

Bill Pasarell Jr

### **Signatories to FY09 National Endowment for the Arts Funding Letter**

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